



# State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

## \*\*\*\*NEWS RELEASE\*\*\*\*

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CONTACT: Joseph Donovan, Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559

### ACT ranks Wisconsin No. 1 for 10th year in a row

*State's 2004 graduates earn composite score of 22.2 with 68 percent participation rate*

MADISON—Wisconsin's composite score of 22.2 remained the highest in the nation among ACT-taking states, holding steady for the fifth consecutive year and extending the state's reign as No. 1. Wisconsin's score tied with Minnesota, a repeat of 1996 when the two states had a composite score of 22.1.

"For 10 years our graduates have been No. 1 or tied for first among the 25 states in which the ACT is the predominant college admissions test," Burmaster said. "Our students'

performance on this assessment is a testament to their attention to academic studies and the dedicated partnership among their teachers, parents, and communities in supporting education."

Students of color represented 9.8 percent of ACT test-takers, up from 9.2 percent the previous year. The composite score for African-American students increased one-tenth of a point to 17.2 for 2004 and is one-tenth of a point higher than for African-American students nationally. Scores for other racial ethnic groups held steady or increased slightly and were generally higher than national averages.

"Our 2004 graduates have a right to be proud of their ACT accomplishment," Burmaster said. "As a state, we must continue our efforts to improve participation and performance for students of color, because this will move us in the right direction to close the achievement gap."

Wisconsin's 45,480 graduates taking the ACT had subject-area test scores of 21.5 in English, 22.1 in math, 22.5 in reading, and 22.2 in science. English and reading subscores were up two-tenths and one-tenth of a point respectively from the previous year, math stayed the same, and science dropped one-

#### 2004 ACT Scores

	Composite Score	Graduates Tested
Wisconsin	22.2	68%
Minnesota	22.2	66%
Iowa	22.0	67%
Nation	20.9	40%

(more)

tenth of a point. Scores for students who took the ACT-recommended core curriculum—four years of English and three years each of mathematics, social studies, and natural science—averaged two points higher than students who took a less rigorous high school program. About 60 percent of ACT-takers in Wisconsin took a core curriculum compared to 56 percent who took a core curriculum nationally.

**2004 ACT Scores by School Program**

	Wisconsin			Nation		
	Core Program	Less than Core	Total Group	Core Program	Less than Core	Total Group
English	22.3	20.1	21.5	21.5	18.7	20.4
Math	22.9	20.7	22.1	21.7	19.1	20.7
Reading	23.2	21.3	22.5	22.3	19.8	21.3
Science	22.8	21.2	22.2	21.7	19.6	20.9
Composite	22.9	21.0	22.2	21.9	19.4	20.9

“To provide a quality

education for every child, we must

ensure that every student has both the academic foundation in the early grades and the opportunity to take a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum in high school,” Burmaster said. The percentage of Wisconsin students taking a core curriculum ranged from 62 percent for white students to 46 percent for Puerto Rican, Hispanic students.

The ACT is a curriculum-based achievement test, and scores on the ACT are considered a predictor of college success. ACT, in collaboration with postsecondary institutions, has established benchmark scores on ACT subject-area tests that indicate readiness for college-level coursework, meaning students who score at or above the benchmark have about a 50 percent chance of earning a B or about a 75 percent chance of earning a C on college-level courses.

Seventy-seven percent of Wisconsin’s ACT-takers scored the benchmark 18 or higher on the English portion of ACT, indicating their readiness for college-level English composition.

Fifty-three percent of Wisconsin ACT-takers

scored 22 on the math portion of the test, indicating their readiness for college algebra. Fewer students, 36 percent, scored the ACT-recommended 24 on the science portion of the test, indicating their readiness for a college-level biology course. Nationally, students meeting the ACT benchmarks for college readiness were 68 percent in English, 40 percent in math, and 26 percent in science.

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**Percentage of Students meeting ACT College-Readiness Benchmarks**

ACT Benchmark*	Wisconsin	Nation
<b>English (18)</b>	77	68
<b>Math (22)</b>	53	40
<b>Science (24)</b>	36	26

\*A benchmark score is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject area test to indicate a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher grade in a corresponding college-level course.

“Both in Wisconsin and the nation, we must encourage students to take more math and science courses in high school,” Burmaster said. “Mathematics, especially, is a gateway to college for students from every background. Those students who do well in math are more likely to complete high school and succeed in postsecondary studies even if their subject interests are outside the field of mathematics or science.”

The ACT is scored on a scale of 1 to 36. Nationwide, 1.2 million graduates took the test at some time during their high school career. The national composite score was 20.9, up one-tenth of a point from the previous year. Starting in February of 2005, ACT will offer an optional 30-minute writing assessment as part of the ACT assessment.

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**NOTE:** Please contact district or school officials for local ACT scores. By the end of the week, the Department of Public Instruction will post scores for public schools and school districts on the School Performance Report (SPR) and Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) websites.

**ATTACHMENT:** Additional information about state and national ACT scores follows.

**2004 ACT Composite Scores by  
Racial/Ethnic Group and School Program\***

<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>Takers</b>	<b>Composite Score</b>	<b>Percentage Taking Core</b>	<b>Composite Scores</b>	
				<b>Core or More</b>	<b>Less than Core</b>
African American	1,652	17.2	49.15	17.6	16.7
American Indian	304	20.2	53.62	21.0	19.2
Asian	1,483	20.3	58.93	21.2	18.8
Mexican American	678	19.7	53.54	20.5	18.7
Puerto Rican, Hispanic	357	19.8	46.22	21.1	18.8
White	38,095	22.6	61.55	23.2	21.4
All Students	45,480	22.2	60.24	22.9	21.0
<b>Nation</b>	<b>Takers</b>	<b>Composite Score</b>	<b>Percentage Taking Core</b>	<b>Composite Scores</b>	
				<b>Core or More</b>	<b>Less than Core</b>
African American	131,925	17.1	55.09	17.8	16.1
American Indian	12,507	18.8	49.97	20.3	17.5
Asian	39,337	21.9	63.09	22.5	20.6
Mexican American	50,671	18.4	54.79	19.2	17.3
Puerto Rican, Hispanic	27,913	18.8	51.17	19.9	17.5
White	787,870	21.8	58.50	22.7	20.3
All Students	1,171,460	20.9	56.45	21.9	19.4

\*Total test-takers by racial/ethnic group does not equal the total number of test-takers for the ACT because not all students identified their racial or ethnic group or their intended high school curriculum.

# ACT Information

**Wisconsin ACT Participation and Scores**

Year	Takers	Percent of Graduates Taking ACT	ACT Subscores				Composite
			English	Math	Reading	Science	
2004	45,480	68	21.5	22.1	22.5	22.2	22.2
2003	45,669	69	21.3	22.1	22.4	22.3	22.2
2002	43,458	68	21.3	22.2	22.4	22.3	22.2
2001	43,691	68	21.5	22.2	22.4	22.4	22.2
2000	43,494	69	21.4	22.2	22.4	22.4	22.2

**NOTE:** Totals for graduating seniors were obtained from "Projections for High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity" 1996-2021, by Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

**Wisconsin ACT Participation by Racial/Ethnic Group**

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
African American	1,652	1,539	1,381	1,336	1,257
American Indian	304	292	241	200	248
Asian	1,483	1,396	1,313	1,208	1,144
Mexican American	678	674	582	581	575
Puerto Rican, Hispanic	357	308	282	285	246
White	38,095	38,782	37,121	37,462	37,157
<b>All Students</b>	<b>45,480</b>	<b>45,669</b>	<b>43,458</b>	<b>43,691</b>	<b>43,494</b>

**Wisconsin ACT Composite Scores by Racial/Ethnic Group**

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
African American	17.2	17.1	17.2	17.2	17.4
American Indian	20.2	20.2	19.9	20	20.2
Asian	20.3	20.1	20	20.1	20.3
Mexican American	19.7	19.2	19.5	19.1	19.4
Puerto Rican, Hispanic	19.8	19.7	19.9	19.9	20.3
White	22.6	22.5	22.5	22.6	22.5
<b>All Students</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>22.2</b>

**2004 ACT Composite Score**

STATE	Average Composite Score	Percent of Graduates Tested
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>68</b>
Minnesota	22.2	66
Iowa	22.0	67
Nebraska	21.7	77
Montana	21.7	56
Kansas	21.6	75
South Dakota	21.5	75
Missouri	21.5	70
Utah	21.5	67
Wyoming	21.4	70
Michigan	21.4	68
Ohio	21.4	66
Idaho	21.3	59
North Dakota	21.2	81
Oklahoma	20.6	69
Tennessee	20.5	87
West Virginia	20.5	65
Arkansas	20.4	73
Colorado	20.3	100
Illinois	20.3	99
Kentucky	20.3	75
Alabama	20.2	76
New Mexico	20.1	61
Louisiana	19.8	87
Mississippi	18.8	91
<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>40</b>

\*Only states in which 50 percent or more of high school graduates took the ACT assessment are considered to have adequate participation to be part of a national score comparison.